



Centre for Applied Social Sciences

TOWARDS REFORMING
THE INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL BASIS OF
THE WATER SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE :

***Current Weaknesses, Recent
Initiatives and Their Operational Problems***

Edited By

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with Bill Derman²

August 1997

University of Zimbabwe

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P O Box MP 167

Mount Pleasant

HARARE

Zimbabwe

(CASS Occasional Paper - NRM Series ; CPN86 / 1997)

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REALITIES OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT :

The Case of the Mazowe Catchment Pilot Project

Tryphena Dougherty¹⁵

Background History

The Mazowe Catchment, particularly the upper portion, has led the national movement towards stakeholder participation in water resources for over a decade. In response to water scarcity and related conflict, the first River Board in Zimbabwe was formed in 1984 in the Glendale area to manage existing Water Rights. The legislation followed in 1985. The first Catchment River Board was formed in 1985. This MCRB has jurisdiction over seven River Boards in its area which covers the upper Mazowe catchment as far as the confluence with the Nyagui near Shamva. The first CIS was started in the catchment in 1984, when the Marodzi CIS was formed. The first CIS in which the Government of Zimbabwe is a partner is also in the area, that is Jumbo CIS, which was formed in 1992. A substantial portion of the Nyagui catchment is also presently managed by River Boards.

When the present pilot project started in 1990, it was a private initiative envisaged for the Mazowe River Board area. The project stemmed from the vision of many stakeholders and water managers to use water development as an engine of growth. The vision was for all stakeholders to be involved in dam investment and, through levies on the water released, further investments could be made to the benefit of the whole community. The ZINWA initiative corresponded with many of the objectives of the private initiative as it was perceived that a project working in harmony with government had a much better chance of success. The project evolved into a pilot project for the proposed new legal structure. All sectors of the community were appraised of the idea over a period of several years and a group of keen individuals was formed to develop the idea. This group, the MRCDG, still meets on a voluntary basis once a month.

Fortuitously, the advent of the WRMS has provided an opportunity to maintain the considerable momentum for stakeholder involvement in water resources developed in the Mazowe catchment. The objective of the pilot project is to interpret the principles of WRMS, to be enshrined in the new Water Act and ZINWA Act, into practical realities. The Mazowe Catchment Pilot project now includes the whole catchment supplying the Mazowe river before it reaches Mozambique.

The Principles of the WRMS

It is worth reiterating the principles of change in the water sector as the participants in the project have used them to guide their progress. The two major principles are:

¹⁵ Mazowe Valley Catchment Development, P.O.Box 166, Glendale.

- (a) stakeholders must be actively involved in water management
- (b) water must be managed following watershed boundaries.

Other principles are:

- . greater equity of access to water
- . more economically feasible investments in water development
- . conservation of the available resources
- . more environmentally and socially sound water management
- . stronger international relations in the area of shared water resources.

Description of the Pilot Area

Figure 1 is a map of the Mazowe catchment. The area is representative of many catchments in Zimbabwe therefore it is reasonable to assume that the lessons learnt will be relevant throughout the country. In particular:

- . Mazowe Catchment falls within two provinces, requiring inter-provincial co-operation
- . there is a wide range of land-uses in the area, including large-scale, small-scale and subsistence agriculture, mining (large and small scale), urban areas and wildlife areas (Umfurudzi safari area and CAMPFIRE projects)
- . inter-catchment issues are important both nationally (Harare demands) and internationally (responsibilities to Mozambique).

Extending Stakeholder Involvement Throughout the Catchment

A one-day workshop (over 100 people) was held in Bindura on 3 July 1996 with the express task of defining a way to create an elected MCB. Attendees from all over the catchment were invited from all different sectors. In general, representatives and leaders were invited e.g. councillors, chiefs, union representatives, together with all government departments that might have an interest in water resource planning and management. At the end of the workshop each sector was invited to nominate a set number of representatives onto a Working Group. Only stakeholders could be nominated, not civil servants.

From a starting point of extreme diversity, the Working Group rapidly developed a pragmatic and forward-looking approach to its task. The Group has met approximately once a month for a year and appointed technical, publicity and logistics sub-committees. The technical sub-committee defined the five sub-catchment areas and has initiated the technical work required for catchment planning. The publicity sub-committee has produced leaflets (in English and Shona), posters and maps and co-ordinated an awareness campaign throughout the catchment. The logistics sub-

committee defined the institutional framework for the new stakeholder organisation and planned the elections.

Minutes of all the meetings have been distributed widely to all MPs, RDCs, DAs, heads of sections in the DWR and union leaders, etc. The literature prepared by the publicity sub-committee was distributed throughout the catchment to most private, government and traditional organisations, including schools, over April and May 1997. Religious organisations were not asked to distribute information though leaders were informed. The distribution of the literature coincided with a formal initiation of the Awareness Campaign by Minister Kangai at a meeting held in Shamva which was attended by approximately 100 people.

Presentations and mini-workshops have also been given by anybody involved in the project on request. These have ranged from Provincial Development Committees to Farmers' Associations to election information meetings at district and village level. The press have been advised of project activities and articles have appeared in "The Herald" and "The Farmer". ZBC Radio 4 has broadcast interviews about the project.

The first task of the new pilot Catchment Board will be to oversee the development of a catchment plan, which can be done without a legal mandate. Until the new legislation has been passed, the elected system can not collect levies, issue water permits or carry out the activities of current River Boards. Catchment planning has therefore been the only incentive for stakeholders to become involved. An existing high level of awareness of sustainability issues and concern that planning is long-term have been factors in enabling motivation.

A Structure to Enable Grassroots Involvement

Figure 1 shows the structure that has been proposed by the Working Group for the stakeholder system. The grassroots level, the Water User Boards, have areas similar in size to existing River Boards as they have been defined by the need for good communication within each area. The boundaries are watersheds where possible, though community needs have sometimes suggested alternatives. For example, in areas with little water development there has been a tendency for administrative boundaries to be particularly important: in areas where road bridges are few and far between, major rivers have formed the boundaries. The Chairman and vice-chairman of each Water User Board will sit on the Sub-Catchment Board and similarly, there will be two representatives from each Sub-catchment Board on MCB.

The inaugural elections have been organised by Sub-catchment Returning Officers who were identified as active in the community. Although regulations and an 'Inaugural meeting opening statement' have been agreed to by the Working Group, the manner in which elections have been carried out has reflected the approach of each returning officer team. In most Water User Board areas, individuals have been nominated at local meetings well in advance of the formal inaugural meeting. The success of the Awareness Campaign has to a large degree been dependent on local communication networks advertising in more detail how to become involved.

Major Concerns of the Stakeholders and Potential Problems

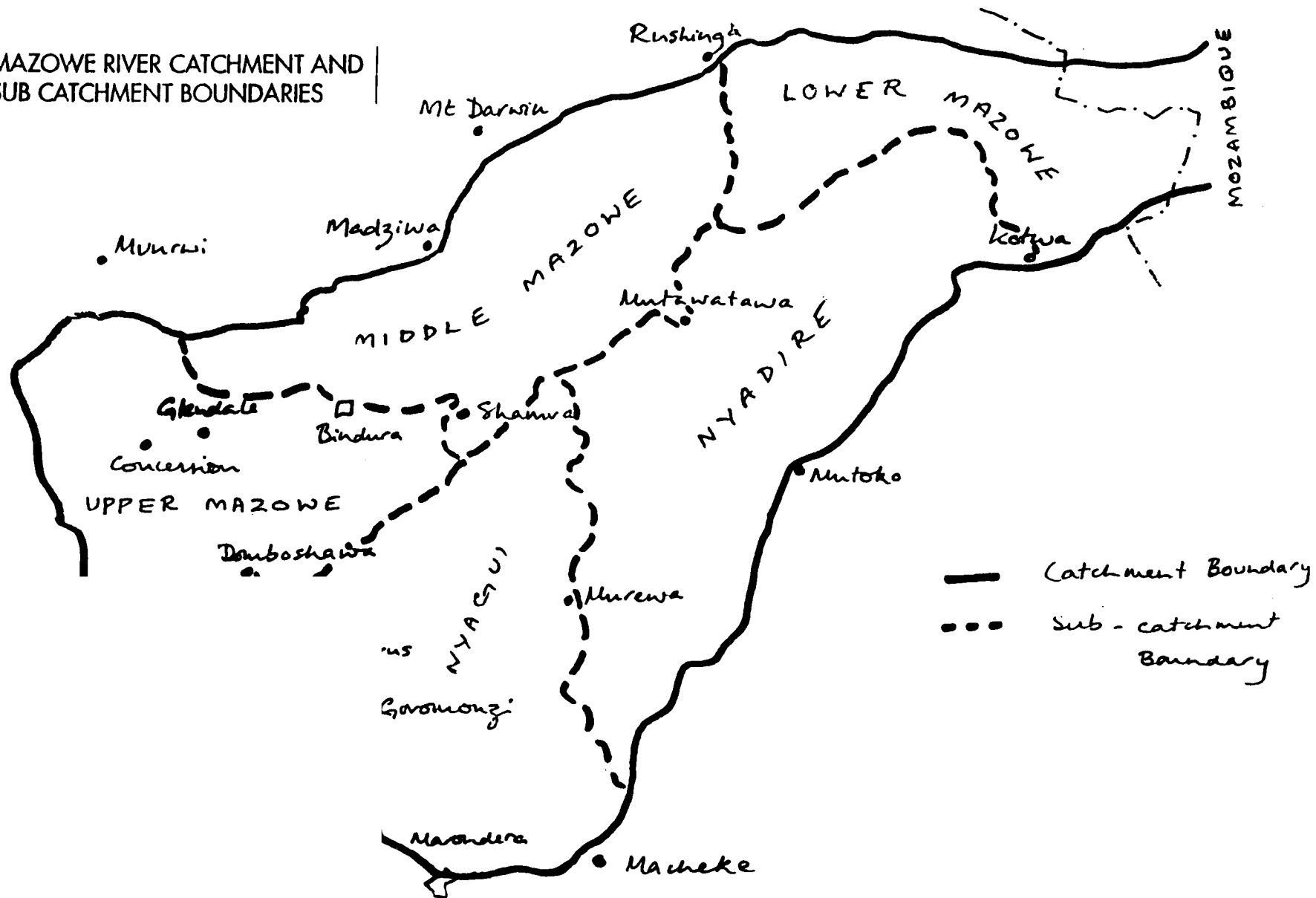
Experience to date has shown that all the different stakeholder groups are well able to co-operate both with each other and with civil servants. However, there remain weak links between the stakeholder structure and a parallel technical support structure. This is inevitable as the institutional structure to enable a decentralised ZINWA to work with provincial and central government departments as well as private consultants has not yet been developed. It is hoped that the process of stakeholders and wide range of technocrats working together to develop a catchment plan will provide useful institutional prototypes.

There is a great desire for the Water User Board system to support existing institutions particularly with regard to environmental management. The current perspective is that, because they are focused around an important natural resource, and because they are not constrained by political boundaries, Water User Boards could be valuable channels of communication.

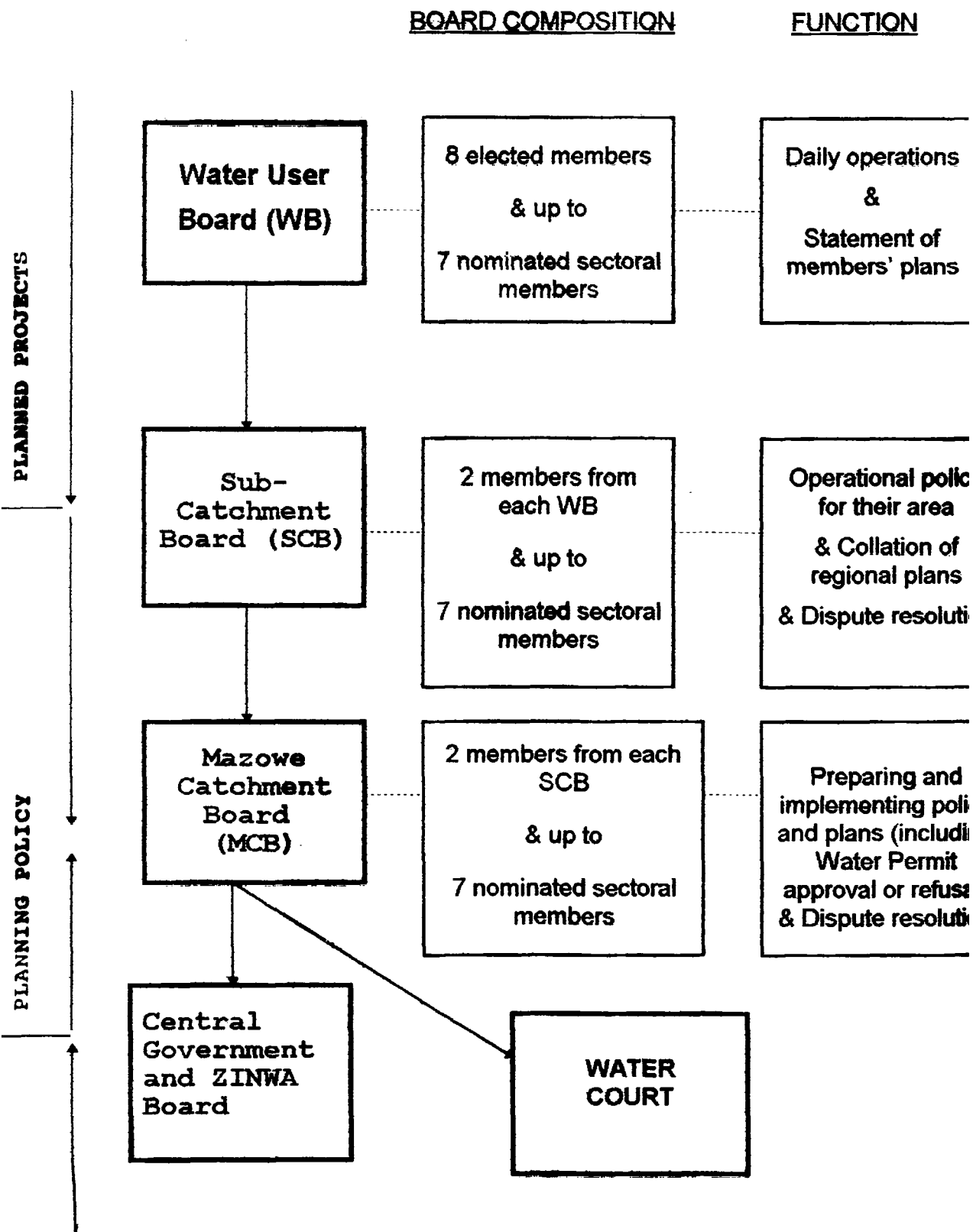
The main concerns of stakeholders, expressed both by the Working Group and other interested people, fall into three categories. The first is the category of transparency. There is great concern that the way meetings are conducted and records kept must enable all stakeholders to fully understand financial transactions and deliberations regarding water permits within the MCB structure. Stakeholders are very aware of the potential for abusing power. Allied to this concern is that of local levies, collected by volunteers, being used nationally rather than within the catchment. This possibility is considered a cheap method of tax collection and, as such, unacceptable.

Finally, there is general consensus that evolutionary change is preferable to revolutionary change and users are embracing the opportunity to manage that change themselves.

MAZOWE RIVER CATCHMENT AND SUB CATCHMENT BOUNDARIES



PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR MAZOWE CATCHMENT BOARD





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